Next Steps

The following steps are needed to complete the Project Planning Process:

- Complete Environmental Studies and hold Location / Design Public Hearing (Winter / Spring 2008)
- Address Public Hearing comments
- Coordinate with federal and state environmental resource agencies throughout the process
- Identify the SHA Preferred Alternative and Conceptual Mitigation (Fall 2008)
- Receive Location / Design Approval (Winter / Spring 2009)

Project Schedule

Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Administration
Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering
P.O. Box 717, Mail Stop C-301
Baltimore, Maryland 21203-0717

MARYLAND 197

MD 197 Project Planning Study

Project Newsletter — **Fall 2007**

Informational Open House

Wednesday
November 14, 2007
5:30pm to 8:30pm

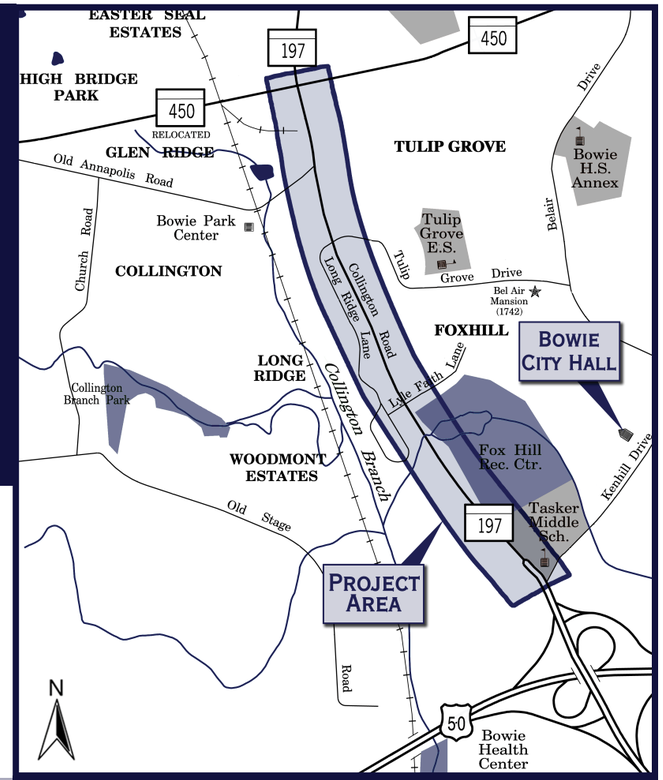
Bowie City Hall
2614 Kenhill Drive
Bowie, Maryland 20715

Public feedback is essential in helping the study team understand how the community may be affected by proposed roadway improvements. The purpose of the Open House is to provide all stakeholders within the study area the opportunity to review and comment on the preliminary findings from the engineering and environmental impact analyses. Please plan to attend and share your opinions!

Community Survey

Help us learn more about your community and your concerns regarding potential project impacts by completing the questionnaire included in this newsletter. The study team values public insight and is seeking to understand more about ways in which the proposed improvements may affect your community. Information gathered from the survey will be used to complete our Community Effects Analysis (CEA). This data can impact the decision-making process and will be taken into consideration as the study team refines and selects an alternative.

In This Issue:



MD 197 Study Area Map

Detailed Studies in Progress

Detailed Studies - Engineering

The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is continuing to develop possible improvements to MD 197 from Kenhill Drive to MD 450. Most recently, the study team has developed more detailed engineering to complete the environmental studies. As described in the Spring 2007 Project Newsletter, the following Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS) were identified:

Alternative 1 - No-Build: minor short-term improvements that occur as part of routine maintenance and safety operations. Although this alternative has been retained, it does not substantively meet the project purpose and need. The No-Build Alternative will serve as a baseline for comparison with the Build alternatives.

Alternative 3 - 5-Lane Typical Section: a five-lane undivided closed section that would match MD 197 north of the project limits, including a 13-foot-wide center turn lane, 11-foot inside travel lanes, and 16-foot bicycle-compatible outside travel lanes (**see Figure 1**). This alternative includes an additional (third) southbound through-travel lane at MD 450 Relocated and one at Kenhill Drive to improve operations and safety. Westbound Kenhill Drive would also be widened to provide a triple left turn southbound onto MD 197.

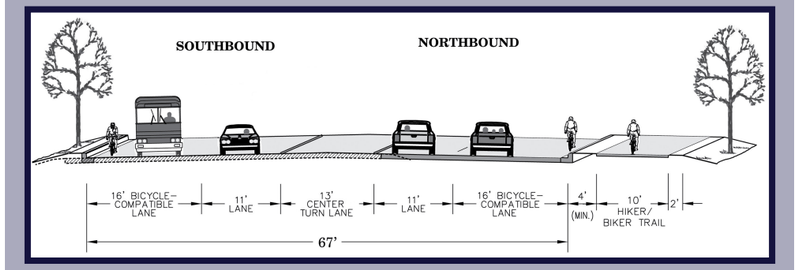


Figure 1: Alternative 3
5-Lane Typical Section

Alternative 4 - 4-Lane Typical Section with Median: a four-lane divided closed section with a 20-foot-wide raised grass median, 11-foot inside travel lanes, and a 16-foot bicycle-compatible outside travel lane in each direction (**see Figure 2**). Left-turn lanes would be provided within the median along MD 197 at all intersections. Alternative 4 also incorporates an additional southbound through lane at MD 450 Relocated and at Kenhill Drive.

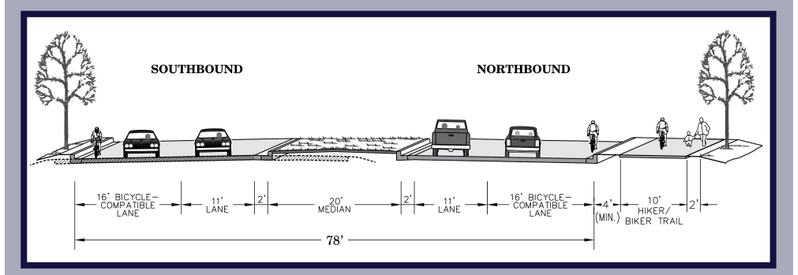


Figure 2: Alternative 4
4-Lane Typical Section

Alternatives 3 and 4 would also include Transportation System Management (TSM) components such as traffic signal synchronization improvements, enhanced bus stop shelters, and pedestrian safety enhancements. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies such as telecommuting, staggered work hours, and carpooling are ongoing efforts that will be considered for the project area. In addition to the on-road improvements, the study team is recommending reconstruction of the existing 10-foot-wide hiker/biker trail along the eastern side of MD 197.

Detailed Studies – Environmental

The development of each alternative includes the study of impacts to both the natural and human environments:

Natural - As part of the environmental studies process, the existing natural features were inventoried and potential impacts to these features were evaluated. The inventory includes the forests adjacent to the MD 197 roadway, as well as wildlife, wetlands, and other natural features.

This section of MD 197 crosses over a tributary to Collington Branch, a stream valley system that lies within the Patuxent River watershed. The tributary begins in Foxhill Park and is carried via concrete culverts to the west side of the existing roadway. The proposed expansion of the existing highway would require improvements to stormwater management facilities. Landscaped surface drainage and filtration areas are being considered to control water flow and remove impurities as runoff is directed away from paved surfaces.

Based on the current right-of-way needs, some impacts to the 100-year floodplain of the Collington Branch tributary are anticipated. The study team continues to identify strategies to minimize impacts to the stream and floodplain. Any unavoidable impacts will be mitigated.

Human - Studies are underway to evaluate how the MD 197 project would affect features important to the community. The study includes an inventory of socioeconomic facilities (religious, educational, communities, neighborhoods, historic properties, parks, shopping centers, land use and other facilities) and an evaluation of ways in which these features may be impacted. Preliminary findings indicate that the project is unlikely to cause land use changes that would negatively affect community facilities and services.

The study team conducted an initial community survey to identify the local assets and needs within the study area. As the project progressed, an additional survey was created and is included in this newsletter to obtain specific, community-level information, to understand the effects of the proejct, and to ensure that all interested persons are properly identified and their input is incorporated in the development of the project.

Air Quality and Noise Studies - In summer 2007, the study team assessed current levels of carbon monoxide and noise at locations along the MD 197 corridor. Information from ongoing studies to evaluate potential impacts on community air quality and noise levels will determine whether proposed roadway improvements will measurably affect local air quality and noise, and whether mitigation strategies (e.g., constructing noise walls) should be implemented.

The study team will continue to work on the following tasks for the Build Alternatives:

- Adding greater detail to traffic and roadway engineering
- Developing avoidance and minimization measures for impacts to environmental features, community resources, and properties
- Quantifying the extent of impacts to socioeconomic, cultural, and natural environmental resources

We Want Your Input!

In addition to the November 14, 2007 Informational Open House, a public hearing will be held in early 2008 (date TBA) for public review and comment on the proposed improvements.

If you would like to be added to the project mailing list, please contact the study team at PG691@sha.state.md.us and include your name, mailing address and e-mail address.

Written comments / requests may be submitted to:

Ms. Felicia L. Alexander
Project Manager
Mail Stop C-301
State Highway Administration
P.O. Box 717
Baltimore, MD 21203-0717

For more information please visit our website at **www.marylandroads.com** and click on **Projects**. To speak with members of the Project Team, please call (410) 545-8511 or toll-free in Maryland 1-800-548-5026.